102

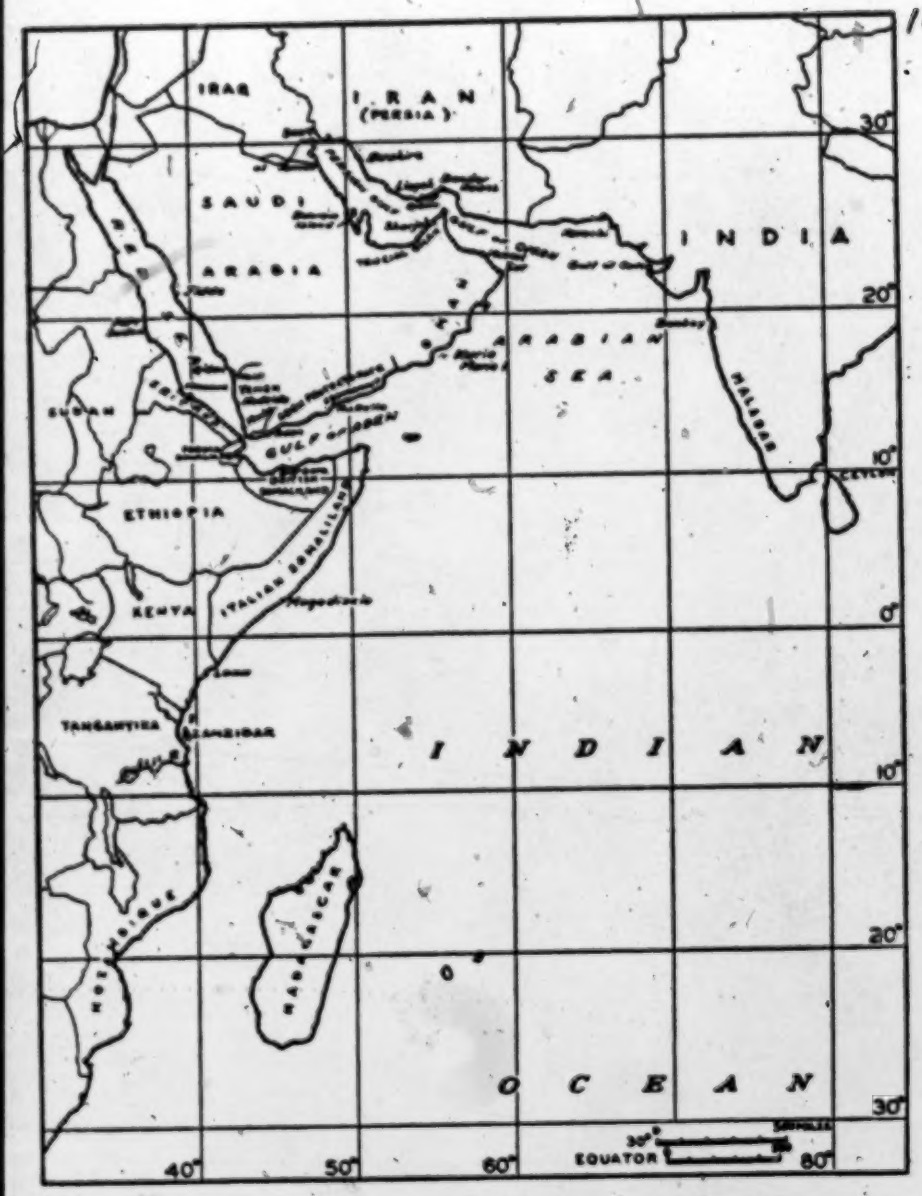

Fig. 1. Map showing the area discussed in the text. Persian Gulf dhows still coast to Zanzibar on the northeast monsoon and return on the southwest monsoon

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4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

487 noted that Western shipping could have successfully accomplished the same end by simply coasting, even if the direct southern route to India had never been discovered.

[102]

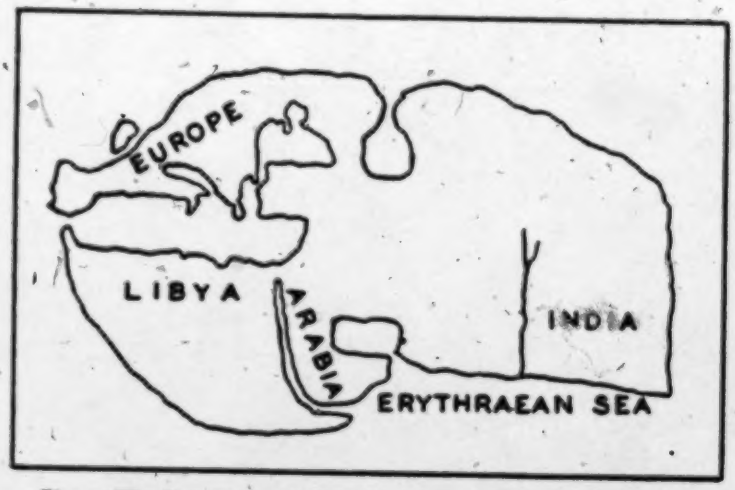

Fig. 2. The East as the ancient Greeks and Romans visualized it in the first century B.C. The map is constructed from distances and directions presented by the ancient geographers

It should also be emphasized that for the people inhabiting the coasts there was never any 'discovery' of the fact that the monsoon trade winds blew in one direction along the South Arabian and East African coasts for six months and then blew in the opposite direction for another six months; the people up and down these coasts knew it as a fact. Thus it was probably known to the Babylonians and Egyptians that the winds along the coasts in the Indian Ocean were subject to seasonal reversals. The Babylonians had organized sea trade as early as the twenty-third century B.C.

However, the fact that a ship could sail between India and Arabia directly, by a route shorter than the coasting route, had to be discovered. Whether it was the Indians or the Arabs who discovered this is not known; while we have a lack of reference to ancient Arabian shipping, there is considerable material referring to Indian shipping before the Christian era. A Buddhist record attributed to the fifth century B.C. relates that the sailors then used 'shore-finding birds' to find land.[2] They released the bird and, if it could not spot land, it returned to the boat;

[2] T. W. R. Davids, *Journal Royal Asiatic Society* (1899), p. 432.

Mogadiscio in Italian Somaliland (over 1,200 miles from Aden); to various Indian ports, which are between 2,000 miles (Karachi) and 2,500 miles (Bombay) from Aden, Besse's dhows have been known to have made an occasional trip.

The point of all this is that Besse has found it profitable to operate his dhows within a 450-mile radius of Aden, but no farther (see Figure 4).

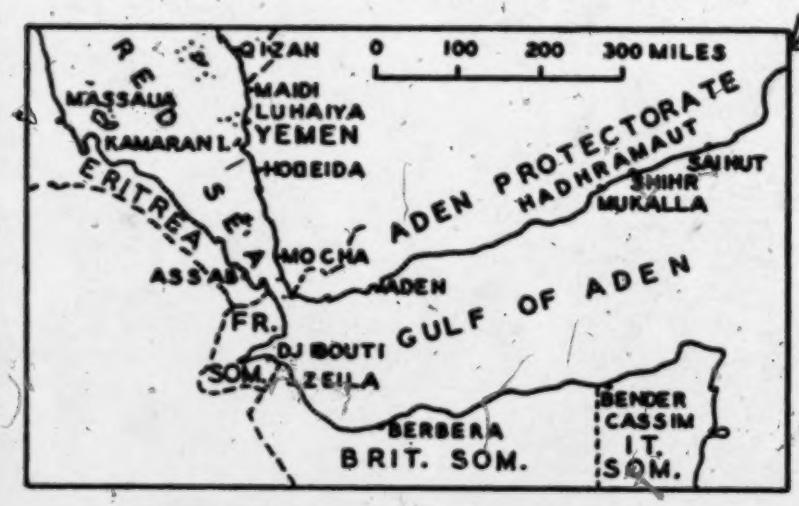

Fig. 4. Map of the southern Red Sea-Gulf of Aden area

The same is true of dhows from other ports in the area, for one finds Aden full of dhows from the same ports to which Besse sends his dhows, but few from ports farther away. Thus it seems that dhows can operate economically to and from Aden within a 450-mile radius. However, more cargo goes out of Aden by dhow than comes in by dhow, and many of the dhows from Yemen and the Somalilands come to Aden empty in the chance of picking up cargoes (see Plate 23—top). It should also be noted that most of Besse's dhows return to Aden empty after delivering their cargo in the 450-mile radius. The above does not apply to the deepwater ships coasting down from Arabia to Africa, as these ships make only one trip a year. The above case for Aden applies only to coasters which make a number of trips a year, always returning to their home port (in Aden or the 450-mile radius).

Vaidya[44] has estimated that in 1944 there were about 5,300 sailing

[44] K. B. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 17.